



**Models of Collaboration in
Nineteenth-Century
French Literature**

Several Authors, One Pen

Edited by
Seth Whidden

ROUTLEDGE


MODELS OF COLLABORATION IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRENCH LITERATURE

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Nineteenth-Century
French Literature
Several Authors, One Pen

Edited by

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Acknowledgments

Few published works are the product of any one person, and a collection of essays – especially one about work undertaken in collaboration – is certainly no exception. The essays in this volume are the result not just of individual scholarship – itself always bearing the traces of colleagues whose work precedes our own – but of scholarship that has been shaped and crafted to fit with this volume’s theme. In addition, the individual chapters were delivered, without exception, in a manner that was timely enough to meet all deadlines and with relatively few editorial issues to rectify. For their attention to detail, diligence, cooperation, and willingness to share – with the editor, with each other, and with you, our readers – the editor thanks the chapters’ authors and translators wholeheartedly.

The answer to why this volume does not address the collaboration between author(s) and editor(s) can be found here: important enough to merit its own study, this topic deserves much more than the injustices we would inflict upon it by squeezing it into this book. All too aware of the contributions that an editorial staff can bring to a project, we extend our gratitude to everyone at Ashgate Publishing, including Ann Donahue, Whitney Feininger, Anthea Lockley, and Emily Ruskell, without whose precious collaboration this study would not have reached its full potential. The cover image, too, is the result of cooperation and collaboration, and the editor wishes to thank Chris Gorton for his sharp eyes, Arnaud Bernadet for his legwork on the ground in Besançon, and Agnès Petithuguenin and her colleagues at the Musée des Beaux Arts et d’Archéologie de Besançon, who graciously permitted the use of “L’Atelier du peintre” (1853) by nineteenth-century French artist Jean Gigoux (1806-1894).

Finally, on behalf of all of the contributors to this book, the editor wishes to thank all those who collaborate – *stricto sensu*, those who share the labor – behind the scenes, though their names rarely appear in print: friends, partners, children, colleagues, extended families, and everyone else who contributes. Whether they pore over every word we write, track down leads that may or may not pan out, inspire us from afar, or pull us away from our desks (so that we can return to it refreshed later on), they help make our work better by making our life better, and for this, and much more, we give them our thanks.

Whatever conclusions might come from this volume, let one simple truth ring clear: that we all benefit, enormously, from communicating and sharing with others. In this manner, in our life and our work, may we follow paths our nineteenth-century predecessors once trod: like them, may we continue to enjoy the fruits of the many collaborations that shape our lives.

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A Word on the Text

Quotations in French are followed by translations in English. Whenever possible, translations come from published materials: in these cases, the information in parentheses following the French quotation will refer to the French edition, and the information in parentheses after the translation refers to the English language translation (both editions appear in each chapter's list of Works Cited). In the cases of French text for which no published translation is available, the translation is the work of that chapter's author (or translator).

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Introduction

On Collaboration¹

Seth Whidden

“It may be said that curiosity is the only useful vice, since without it there would be neither discovery nor invention; and curiosity it is which lends interest to many a book written in collaboration.” (Matthews 295)

“Aucun chef-d’œuvre n’est le résultat d’une collaboration” (Gide 357) [No *chef-d’œuvre* was ever produced by several people together (343)]. So says Olivier in *Les faux-monnayeurs*; in his distaste for multiple authorship he is picking up on La Bruyère from two centuries earlier: “L’on n’a guère vu jusques à présent un chef-d’œuvre d’esprit qui soit l’ouvrage de plusieurs” (9) [A literary masterpiece that is the work of several hands has yet to be seen (qtd. in Hemmings 49)]. The “myth of solitary genius,”² as Jack Stillinger and others have discussed, has long held sway in literary studies, going back to “the concept of the poet as prophet and possessor of transcendent knowledge [... giving] the writer and the artistic intention an especially exalted status” (Inge 624). More recently, considerations of the instability of this traditional “solitary genius” have shown how “double writing is a symptom of the monolithic author’s decline” (Koestenbaum 8). In this respect, literary collaboration is an example of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, with multiple languages existing in every word.³ “Collaborative texts, like quilted novels, make the reader vulnerable to heterogeneity and indeterminacy, and, by obscuring who wrote what, they prevent the reader from limiting the text’s sense” (Koestenbaum 8). In particular, gender studies have questioned the notion of the monolithic author, with good reason, and have focused on the multiplicity offered by collaborative texts.⁴ For many such studies, literary collaboration extends

¹ My discussion of collaboration benefited greatly from the wisdom and comments of Frank Paul Bowman, to whose memory this introduction is dedicated.

² This phrase is borrowed from Stillinger’s book, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (see Works Cited).

³ Referring to “the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions” (263), Bakhtin defines “heteroglossia” as that “internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence [... permitting] a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (263). See in particular his chapter “Discourse in the Novel” (259-422).

⁴ Just some examples of studies that focus on specific instances of literary influence and collaboration include: Peter F. Alexander, *Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Literary*

beyond the page and enters into the more social aspects of textual creation; in this model, multiple authorship reflects “the partners’ search for fulfillment and self-expression.”⁵ In a description that bears similar tones, the Goncourt brothers called their own collaboration: “[...] la confession de deux vies *inséparées* dans le plaisir, le labeur, la peine; de deux pensées jumelles, de deux esprits recevant du contact des hommes et des choses, des impressions si semblables, si identiques, si homogènes, que cette confession peut être considérée comme l’expansion d’un seul *moi* et d’un seul *je*” (37) [the confession of two lives *never separated* in pleasure, in work or in pain, the confession of two twin spirits, two minds receiving from the contact of men and things impressions so alike, so identical, so homogeneous, that his confession may be considered the effusion of a single *ego*, of a single *I* (xix)].

Early studies of multiple authorship focused less on who contributed what and more on the silent partners: those whose contributions went unnoticed. As Bette London discussed in her book *Writing Double*:

[...] in the case of women, literary collaborators suffered from a double invisibility – the invisibility of collaboration and the invisibility of women’s writing. Even where such collaborations were openly recognized, they tended to be represented in ways guaranteed to ensure their marginalization. To study collaboration, then, was to study the conditions of its erasure. (9)

While Wayne Koestenbaum’s *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* is certainly among the most important recent studies of collaborative literature,⁶ it is incomplete in its consideration of multiple-author works. Here we

Partnership (New York: St. Martin’s, 1992); Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds, *Significant Others: Creativity & Intimate Partnerships* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993); Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Scott W. Klein, *The Fictions of James Joyce and Wyndham Lewis: Monsters of Nature and Design* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Jeffrey Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship, and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Miranda Seymour, *A Ring of Conspirators: Henry James and His Literary Circle, 1895-1915* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989). See also James S. Leonard, Laura Brady, and Robert Murray Davis, “Collaborative Writing: A Selective Bibliography,” *Author-ity and Textuality: Current Views of Collaborative Writing*, ed. James S. Leonard et al. (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1994): 229-50.

⁵ Benstock 240. For more on collaboration and gender, see “Why Call Successful Co-authoring Feminine?”, 48-60 in *(First Person)?: A Study of Co-authoring in the Academy*, by Kami Day and Michele Eodice (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2001); and *Common Ground: Feminist Collaboration in the Academy*, ed. Elizabeth G. Peck and JoAnna Stephens Mink (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998).

⁶ Particularly useful is his introduction, “Interpreting Double Talk: An Introduction” (1-14).

propose a new model for considering literary collaboration, in nineteenth-century French literature and beyond, and the essays in this volume help to shed some light on the contour lines that define – to the extent to which such definition is possible – the rich field of literary collaboration.⁷

To avoid confusion, a few words of clarification are in order: to avoid excessive repetition of the word “writer,” the terms “author” and “writer” are sometimes used interchangeably, even though they obviously do not designate the same person. Collaboration focuses on the process of literary creation; as such, the writer should be taken to be the privileged member of any tension between writer and author. In addition, while there is much to be said about the numerous kinds of collaboration, two important examples fall beyond the scope of this study. First is that kind of collaboration that inevitably develops between writers and editors, somewhere during the creative process, in which the latter shapes, redefines, and certainly collaborates on an early version, leading up to a final published work; as Stillinger has shown, this kind of collaboration is common to nearly all works that we commonly consider to be the fruits of a single, solitary author.⁸ Second is what T.S. Eliot referred to as “that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art” (407); the rich field of narratology takes on this exchange much more fully than could be attempted in this volume. Finally, the studies in this volume do not follow the approach, espoused by Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron in their *Significant Others*, that limits their discussion of collaborative couples to those “who have shared a sexual as well as creative partnership” (9); this volume’s criterion is that the activity of authorship be textual, not (necessarily) sexual.

Let us return to Koestenbaum’s central assumptions regarding collaborative texts:

A text is most precisely and satisfyingly collaborative if it is composed by two writers who admit the act by placing both of their names on the title page. A double signature confers enormous interpretive freedom: it permits the reader to see the act of collaboration shadowing every word in the text. Collaborative works are intrinsically *different* than books written by one author alone; even

⁷ The theoretical discussion that follows retains the central argument of my “On Poetry and Collaboration in the Nineteenth Century.”

⁸ See Jack Stillinger, especially his “What Is an Author?” (3-24), in which he states, “multiple authorship – the collaborative authorship of writings that we routinely consider the work of a single author – is quite common, and that instances [...] can be found virtually anywhere we care to look in English and American literature of the last two centuries” (22); there is no reason why this statement cannot be extended to include French literature of the same time period. M. Thomas Inge concurs, stating that “It is now commonplace to understand that all texts produced by authors are not the products of individual creators” and “There has seldom been a time when someone did not stand between author and audience in the role of a mediator, reviser, or collaborator” (623 and 624, respectively).

if both names do not appear, or one writer eventually produces more material, the decision to collaborate determines the work's contours, and the way it can be read. (2)

As discussed in this volume's chapters, examples from nineteenth-century French letters expose the limits of these claims, beginning with Koestenbaum's first sentence: that authors "admit the act" by signing their names to a title page. Similarly, Koestenbaum's insistence on *two* writers producing *one* text stops short of the enhanced richness of texts such as poems in the *Album Zutique*, for example, in which the "collaboration shadowing every word in the text" is shared by three, four, and even five different authorial presences; safety in numbers can be an important aspect of multiple-author texts. Finally, while it is true that "Collaborative works are intrinsically *different* [since] the decision to collaborate determines the work's contours, and the way it can be read," the focus on "*books* written by one author alone" highlights the privileged position given to the novel; in this respect Koestenbaum is in good company, as almost all studies of collaborative writing focus on theater and prose, as we see in Sir Walter Besant's early work "On Literary Collaboration":

[...] the main advantage of partnership lies in the discussion of the plot and its situations, and the hammering out of all the effects of which they are capable. To state this is to state the apology of literary partnership. Not the saving of labour, but the improvement of the work should be the reason for partnership. Two minds working upon the same idea, having the same object in view, and agreed upon the group of characters to carry out the plan of the piece, ought to arrive, more certainly and more clearly than one mind alone, not only at the possibilities but also at the certainties of the subject. They should discover the Fate – the Necessity – which compels the actors to the end. [...] the chief advantage of collaboration is that it is tolerably certain to produce clearness of purpose, a well-defined plot, and distinct characters. (207-8)

In a similar vein, Théophile Gautier railed against the preponderance of collaboration in literature written for the stage in 1838. Just three years after the introduction to his *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, this description of an assembly-line approach to literary collaboration shows his preoccupation with how the pressures of the growing industrial age and the importance of progress would come to bear on the literary work:

Une pièce se fabrique absolument comme un habit; l'un des collaborateurs prend la mesure de l'acteur, l'autre coupe l'étoffe, et le troisième assemble les morceaux; l'étude du cœur humain, le style, la langue, tout cela est regardé comme rien. La collaboration, pour une œuvre de l'intelligence, est quelque chose d'incompréhensible, et dont il ne peut résulter que des produits hybrides et monstrueux, en admettant même que les collaborateurs accouplés soient des

gens d'esprit, ce qui est rare. Avec un pareil mode de travail, toute inspiration est impossible; le génie est essentiellement solitaire. (82-3)

[A play is created just like a costume; one of the collaborators takes the actor's measurements, the other cuts the fabric, and the third assembles the pieces; the study of the human heart, of style, of language, is all looked at as nothing. Collaboration, for a work of intelligence, is incomprehensible, and all that can come from it are hybrid and monstrous products, even if we admit that the collaborators are smart people, which is rare. With such a means of working, all inspiration is impossible; genius is essentially solitary.]⁹

Over the last few centuries, numerous critics have, in their silence with respect to poetry, preserved the primacy of the monolithic poet and thus unwittingly aided and abetted “the concept of the poet as prophet and possessor of transcendent knowledge.”

A more useful approach to multiple-authored works is a model that is not limited to novels and considers the possibilities of numerous authors residing in a single work, and for many – though admittedly not all – of the ways in which multiple authorial presences can impact our reading of a given text. Since, as Matthews said, “In a genuine collaboration, when the joint work is a true chemical union and not a mere mechanical mixture, it matters little who holds the pen” (301), it is preferable to avoid a dissection of a work into its constitutive collaborative parts in the quest for some authorial whodunit: a near impossibility that nevertheless leads Koestenbaum and others to speculate and identify with one contributor over another; as he explains:

I find, however, that one writer in a team captures my sympathies more entirely: I enter the mind of the writer who keenly feels lack or disenfranchisement, and seeks out a partner to attain power and completion. Approaching the text, I ask how this writer's wish for a partner infused the work eventually composed; I let his sought-after collaborator remain a shadowy, aloof figure, and I inquire less assiduously into this second man's motives. (2)

Rather than “enter the mind of the writer,” essays in the present volume on collaboration seek to focus on the very nature of the collaborative texts themselves.

Two major categories can help frame these studies: collaboration *in praesentia* and collaboration *in absentia*. In the former, the co-authors are physically present at the time of creation; this is the traditional collaborative model of two or more people co-writing a text. Within this broad category, there is a distinction between

⁹ Quoted in Hemmings 48. See Hemmings's important analysis of the over 30,000 plays produced in the nineteenth century in France, and the trends of collaboratively written plays within each theatrical subgenre, from 1816 to 1900.

authorial presences that are explicitly stated and those that are merely implied, or perhaps left unspoken. Most often, of course, both or all authors are explicitly named; in this case, we have the traditional co-authored work.¹⁰ An obvious example from nineteenth-century French letters is the collaboration of Alphonse Daudet and Paul Arène, who wrote the first five stories that would eventually become *Lettres de mon moulin* under the joint signature Marie-Gaston.¹¹ The counter example, in which one or more authors are active in the work's creation but not mentioned, falls under the category of ghost-written materials. Perhaps the best-known case of ghost writing in nineteenth-century French letters involved Alexandre Dumas. Of his many collaborators – detailed in the 1845 pamphlet *Fabrique de romans. Maison Alexandre Dumas et compagnie* – few generated as much interest and controversy as Auguste Maquet, who wrote much of *The Three Musketeers* and other works that appeared with Dumas's name alone on the title page.¹² Dumas's works later would be famously defended by Thackeray in his *Roundabout Papers*:

They say that all the works bearing Dumas's name are not written by him. Well? Does not the chief cook have aides under him? Did not Rubens's pupils paint on his canvases? Had not Lawrence assistants for his backgrounds? [...] Sir Christopher is the architect of St. Paul's. He has not laid the stones or carried up the mortar. There is a great deal of carpenter's and joiner's work in novels which surely a smart professional hand might supply. A smart professional hand? I give you my word, there seem to me parts of novels – let us say the love-making, the "business," the villain in the cupboard, and so forth, which I should like to order

¹⁰ Such is the case of sociologists Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox, whose foundational work on collaboration *The Imperial Animal* considers the very kind of collaborative text it exemplifies. As they explain: "We both had one sacred rule. Every single sentence had to be written with both perpetrators present [...] No taking home of manuscripts, no dividing up of chapters. Either could rewrite anything and rewrite everything, so much so that eventually we forgot totally who started and finished what, whose idea was this and whose caveat that" (xxvii).

¹¹ About this collaboration, Murray Sachs states, "While the statements of both Paul Arène and Alphonse Daudet make it plain that there was some form of collaboration in the writing of those stories, we are still a long way from certainty as to the exact contribution of each" (116).

¹² Written by Eugène de Mirecourt, pseudonym of Charles Jean Baptiste Jacquot, *Fabrique de romans* popularized the use of the word *nègre* to mean ghost-writer, and led to virulent attacks in the press and, ultimately, to de Mirecourt's condemnation. As for Maquet, he famously sued Dumas for damages in 1857-1858. For more on Dumas, Maquet, and de Mirecourt, see Gustave Simon, *Histoire d'une Collaboration: Alexandre Dumas et Auguste Maquet* (Paris: Editions Georges Crès & Cie, 1919). Most recently, this collaboration was the subject of *Signé Dumas*, a play written by Cyril Gely and Eric Rouquette, performed for the first time at the Festival d'Anjou (16 June 2003), and published that same year (Paris: Les impressions nouvelles, 2003).